



METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

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Memorandum

TO: Partnership Board

DATE: December 8, 2006

FR: Ashley Nguyen

W. I.

RE: 2006 Spare the Air/Free Transit Campaign Evaluation

MTC and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District partnered with 26 Bay Area transit operators to implement the 2006 Spare the Air/Free Transit Campaign (2006 Campaign). We offered free rides, all-day, on the first six, non-holiday Spare the Air weekdays of the summer ozone season (June 1 through October 13). Our goals were to raise public awareness about the linkages between air quality and travel choices and to encourage the public to adjust their travel behavior by reducing driving trips through trip linking, eliminating a trip, carpooling, walking or biking and/or by taking advantage of the free transit rides. Free transit rides were offered on the first six Spare the Air weekdays: June 22, 23, and 26 and July 17, 20, and 21. The original campaign budget anticipated funding for just three days, but the early onset of heat waves in June tapped out the initial budget of \$6.8 million. Unanticipated additional transit revenues realized under the 2006-07 State budget permitted the funding of three additional days in July. The 2006 Campaign total budget for 6 days was \$13.2 million using Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ), State Transit Assistance (STA), and Transportation Fund for Clean Air (TFCA) funds.

Program Evaluation Results

MTC, in consultation with the Air District, prepared a program evaluation of the 2006 Campaign. Key elements addressed in the evaluation include determining the number of additional riders carried on the six Spare the Air days, understanding the travel behaviors of people who responded to the campaign, assessing overall public awareness and recall of Spare the Air messaging, and estimating the emission reductions produced by the program. The full program report is attached for your review, and a few key highlights are outlined below:

- Transit ridership levels rose by approximately 15 percent regionwide over the six Spare the Air days, adding a total of 1.35 million riders over established baseline conditions. This equates to an average of an additional 225,000 riders per Spare the Air day.
- Roughly 10 percent of transit riders who participated in our onboard passenger survey reported that they made a conscious decision to change their travel behavior by taking transit rather than driving a car because it was a Spare the Air day.
- An estimated 2.2 tons of nitrogen oxides (NOx), 2.2 tons of reactive organic gases (ROG), and 0.9 tons of particulate matter (PM-10) per Spare the Air day were reduced. Collectively, drivers reduced an estimated 528,279 vehicle trips and more than 3.5 million miles of travel per Spare the Air day. Another 0.1 tons of ROG were

- removed per Spare the Air day from decreased or avoided use of consumer products such as aerosol spray, barbeque lighter fluid, and gas powered mowers.
- The cost-effectiveness estimate is \$410,800 per ton of total emissions reduced based on our estimate of 32.2 tons of NOx, ROG, and PM-10 emissions reduced over the six Spare the Air days. This is much less cost-effective than most of the mobile source emission reduction measures funded through the Air District's TFCA program.

Fund Programming for 2007

The Third Cycle STP/CMAQ Programming Policy (MTC Resolution 3723) commits \$12 million in Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program Funds (CMAQ) for the Spare the Air/Free Transit Campaign. For FY 2006-07, a total of \$4.5 million in CMAQ funds was programmed and subsequently expended for the 2006 Spare the Air/Free Transit Campaign, leaving a balance of \$7.5 million for future programming. The decision to program the \$7.5 million towards a fourth Spare the Air/Free Transit Campaign was contingent upon the results from an evaluation of the 2006 Campaign.

Recommendation for 2007 Campaign

MTC and Air District staff recommend that the Spare the Air program continue to offer free, all-day, transit rides on Spare the Air days. We estimate that it will cost approximately \$2.5 million per day to cover full fare recovery, marketing and program evaluation expenses. For the upcoming FY 2007-08 ozone season, we will be able to offer free rides on three Spare the Air weekdays within the \$7.5 million budget. The Air District would continue to provide up to \$1 million in Transportation Fund for Clean Air (TFCA) funds as the local match. If we are able to secure private sponsorship through corporate or foundation funding, we can either augment the cost of the three days with private funds or extend the program by a certain number of days based on the amount of private funds available.

This recommended approach takes into consideration that (1) the majority of the participating transit operators recommend repeating the free, all-day transit rides offer, primarily because it poses minimal operational difficulties; (2) the Spare the Air/free transit messaging is direct and easy for the public and media to understand, making it easier for us to advertise to and spread the word amongst a regional audience; and lastly, (3) this year's campaign proved more successful by far than the past two campaigns which offered only the free morning commutes as evident by the ridership increases. BART, Caltrain, Golden Gate and Alameda Ferries did not support repeating the free, all-day transit rides because of security, crowding, and customer experience issues. We believe we can work with these operators to address and resolve these operational and security issues by bringing additional ferry boats into service, coordinating Spare the Air activities with BART police, and possibly augmenting the program to reflect the ferry operators' idea for a "2 for 1" promotion.

As a companion to the Spare the Air/Free Transit Campaign, the Air District will work with private industry partners to engage in voluntary emission reduction measures such as limiting deliveries of gasoline to local stations on Spare the Air days. In 2007, the idea is to "broaden the base" of Spare the Air activities to augment the Free Transit Campaign. Furthermore, as a longer-term strategy, the Air District will continue its efforts to develop enforceable measures that could be implemented in the following years.